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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAN MEPP IRAQ GWOT EU LATAM-U.S.
CHECHNYA CONGO;BERLIN

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A. Lead Stories Summary

HEADLINES

Pope Benedict XVI First Encyclical (Frankfurter Allgemeine)

Pope Warns Against Unbridled Capitalism (Sueddeutsche Zeitung)

Message Of Love From The Holy See (Die Welt)

Wages Continue To Drop (Frankfurter Rundschau)

German Hostages - Are Kidnappers Saddam Supporters? (Tagesspiegel)

EU Commission Poll: Germans Fear Europe (Berliner Zeitung)

Editorials focused on the papal encyclical and the government's economic growth expectations. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with stories on the two Germans who were kidnapped in Iraq.

B. (Iran) Nuclear Program

1. "We Are Not Powerless"

Bernd Ulrich judged in a front-page editorial in center-left, weekly Die Zeit of Hamburg (1/26):

"Iran's president is now agitating against Israel and is trying to get hold of WMDs which highlights his agitation.. The unnerved West, which is increasingly losing power and moral strength, does not know how to react to it. For in the area where it is very strong, in economic matters, it does not have the courage to take advantage of its power.. It is very likely that Iran is striving for WMD, it supports Islamic terror, and there is no doubt that it can become dangerous for the West and Israel. And it is difficult to defeat it with military means. These are reasons enough to learn from the Iraq crisis: First, the West was divided; second the reasons for the war were not credible. With respect to a united stance, the West learned its lesson. Today, George W. Bush sounds like Jacques Chirac of the past. But unfortunately, Chirac sounds today like Bush did in the past, and this affects the second

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matter: legitimacy.

"The West does not seem to care that there are good reasons against an Iranian bomb, but that these are no arguments that could convince even moderate Iranians. Indeed, it is difficult to explain why France or India, not Brazil or Iran, are allowed to possess the bomb. And if in this situation, Chirac insinuates that he wants to use the bomb against Iran, the rest of the world only learns the bizarre nuclear ethics: those who have the bomb, own the bomb. The Iranians can only conclude from the French threat: Get the bomb while it is possible..

"Of course, the West cannot concede the same rights to dictatorships as to democracies. But it should not come on strong if it wants to implement its standards, because it is becoming increasingly clear that others are no longer willing to accept double standards.. Evo Morales, Bolivia's new president, for instance, refuses to accept that people consume cocaine in the western world, while the same West wants to criminalize Bolivian coca farmers.. The West is about to lose its global moral hegemony and this weakening is coming to the fore in Iran, for the rulers in Tehran feel one thing very clearly: it is not easy to convey the western arguments in the world; diplomatic solutions are not very promising; the West will not dare to wage another war, and it is too cowardice to implement economic sanctions..

"Currently, the West presents itself as a power that takes liberties all over the world without demanding much of itself. The decisive questions are what kind of economic sanctions can be imposed without intensifying the bonds between the Iranian people and its leadership and what can be done to keep Russia and China quiet. But it would only make sense to discuss these questions when the West has developed a uniform political opinion, and when it is also willing to make economic sacrifices.."

2. "Control What You Can't Prevent"

Constanze Stelzenmiller opined in another editorial in center-left, weekly Die Zeit of Hamburg (1/26):

"Sooner or late Iran will join the club of nuclear powers. This will deal the West's credibility a serious blow and further destabilize the Near and Middle East. Nevertheless, this Iranian president will not give the order to shoot. He may long to become a martyr but the Iranian

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leadership prefers power on earth much more, and [it knows that] the retaliatory strikes following an attack would be horrible. Thus the Iranian regime is faced with a bitter insight: the new weapons will be of no use to the regime. The nuclear power status does not strengthen its external security nor does it consolidate its rule over the Iranian people. On the contrary, the weakness of the powers-that-be will become even more obvious.

"But the situation for the West will not be comfortable either. It is certainly right that this regime is supporting terrorists on a global scale, but a nuclear failed state whose weapons-gradable material falls in to the hands of fanatics like Osama bin Laden or his equals, is all the more intolerable. For this is the perverse paradox of nuclear proliferation: nuclear weapons are (only) useful to suicide mass murderers. That is why we must help Iran safeguard its facilities. What for the United States is Pakistan, would for Europe be Iran: the protectorate of a rogue state."

3. "Obvious"

Klaus-Dieter Frankenberger argued in an editorial in center-right Frankfurter Allgemeine (1/26):

"When Moscow recently suggested enriching uranium on Russian territory, it got a brush-off from Tehran. but now when the reference of the issue to the UN Security Council is coming closer, the Russian offer suddenly meets with Iranian interest. The Iranian regime by no means wants to become an issue in New York.. But why? Obviously it considers a political symbolic loss of reputation to be a

serious matter. And that is why the (alleged) interest in the Russian offer is being devalued with a threat: when the issue is referred to the UN Security Council, an industrial enrichment of uranium would begin. We can bet that similar maneuvers will occur because Iran does not act and negotiate with good faith. The five permanent UN security Council members should not allow Iran to make a fool of them."

C. (MEPP) Palestinian Elections

1. Bettina Marx commented on national radio station Deutschlandfunk of Cologne (1/25):

"We are not talking about a free Palestinian

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parliament, because the representatives elected with so much commitment and hope have almost no political leeway.. Elections in an occupied country are grotesque. The Palestinians did not really have a choice. The democratic ritual only concealed the hopelessness of their situation. In reality, one generation after another is being deprived of its right of self-determination and future."

2. Centrist Stuttgarter Nachrichten (1/26) observed:

"Many people did not believe that Palestinians were really capable of conducting an orderly election given the considerable weakness of their administration. But we did not hear about any major disruptions. The discipline during the election is remarkable. The Palestinians have apparently adopted democratic habits. That is a strong message to Israel."

3. Right-of-Center Ostthruinger Zeitung (1/26) argued:

"Whatever the result of the Palestinian elections will be, the international community must continue its engagement, and revive the peace process by exerting some pressure. If necessary, a more moderate Hamas must be included. Early foreign calls for boycotting Hamas are not helpful. Remember that Arafat had bloodstains on his hands before he reached out to negotiate with Israel. If Hamas wins the elections, we should see the crisis as an opportunity."

D. (Iraq) Report On Use Of Funds For Iraq's Reconstruction

1. "Continue To Show Courage"

Markus Ziener opined in an editorial in business daily Handelsblatt of Duesseldorf (1/26):

"The interim report of the U.S. inspector for Reconstruction has now disclosed circumstances that sound bizarre but should not surprise anyone.. In view of the sums spent on Iraq's reconstruction, it is probably unavoidable that some funds are misused. But in a country that needs every dollar, this is a tragedy.. It is also tragic because this country is so immeasurably rich. But this wealth is burdening Iraq like a curse.. Theoretically Iraq is so rich, but as a matter of fact it is very poor.. Is it really necessary to help Iraq despite the dangers that exist in the country? The answer is a clear 'yes,' for the

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alternative would be to leave the country on its own. And this would not only be highly risky as far as security policy is concerned, but it would also destroy the vague perspective of a better future, for one basic assumption is still right: With a successful [development], support and

sympathy for the terrorists and radicals will decline.

"There is no way around but to continue with the reconstruction process. This includes pushing the political process and pressing for the formation of an all-comprising government. It also includes resolutely fighting terror and increasing security as far as possible; and it includes supporting courageous people who defy the dangers, irrespective of whether these are Iraqis or foreigners."

E. (GWOT) Council Of Europe On CIA Secret Prisons

1. "Black Holes"

Florian Klenk opined in an editorial in center-left, weekly Die Zeit of Hamburg (1/26):

"Indeed, special investigator Dick Marty did not present anything new when he tabled an interim report to the Council of Europe on Tuesday, but his efforts to disclose the involvement of Europeans in the 'outsourcing' of torture are honorable. Europe needs people who persistently point out that even terrorists should not be tortured. But Marty is an investigator without clout. He can only produce a press summary. No politician can be forced to inform him. The CIA affair shows that there is an international cooperation of terror investigators. And Marty showed that an independent control of their excesses does not exist."

F. (EU) Reforms

1. "Half Way To Lisbon"

Jeanne Rubner commented in center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (1/26):

"Lisbon is a failure. This is not Barroso's fault but that of the member states. One can accuse the Commission of being naive given that it wants to view meeting the Lisbon goals as the yardstick for its work. In reality, it cannot contribute much. What can the Commission do if the great

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members of the union avoid reforms and pay lip service, promising to spend more money on research? Germany, Italy and France are the greatest Lisbon sinners.. Barroso must make it possible to harmonize the EU budget and the Lisbon goals. The EU parliament was right to reject the foul compromise reached in December. Europe's policy is hardly credible if it wants to kickstart the economy with the help of research and education but does not increase the budget for these sectors."

2. "Brussels Whirlwind"

Wolfgang Proissl editorialized in business daily Financial Times Deutschland of Hamburg (1/26):

"The Lisbon agenda for growth and jobs is like a grounded helicopter with rotating airscrews. It makes a lot of wind but does not move.. EU President Barroso does not just see the Lisbon agenda as an economic tool but also as therapeutic means. By talking to member countries, he wants to encourage them to launch reforms, hoping that a recognizable increase in growth and jobs would cure the skeptical view Europeans have of the EU. If the economy gets going again, Barroso could credibly describe himself as the father of the recovery."

3. "Explosive"

Michael Scheerer observed in business daily Handelsblatt of Duesseldorf (1/26):

"Of course, it would be nice if the EU had an independent budget with its own source of revenue. The permanent fight between the paymasters and the subsidy receivers could belong to the past. The current dispute over the budget from 2007 to 2013 shows how difficult it is to draft a budget in a community of 25 countries. However, Europe would not be able to cope with a great tax reform at the moment. The authorities of the European Union, such as the Council of Ministers, the Commission and the parliament, can only make changes on the side of the expenditures. In the revision of the budget for 2008/2009, the structural funds must be cut and parts of agriculture must be redirected to the national level. Achieving this will be difficult enough."

G. (Western Hemisphere) Latam-U.S. Relations

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1. "'The Axis Of The Good'"

Thomas Schmid opined in a full-page report in center-left, weekly Die Zeit of Hamburg (1/26):

"A new wind is blowing in Latin America, a wind that blows from the left.. Among the larger Latin American states, only Colombia is considered a safe bank for the United States.. Latin America is turning red. Once before, the subcontinent had a uniform color but the new democracies of the past quickly faced the 'debt trap' and were mercilessly forced by the IMF to implement the 'consensus from Washington' but this consensus did not help resolve the financial crises either. It has profoundly discredited the neo-liberal model in Latin America and with it also the people who implemented it in the region..

"Of course, conflicts of interest are now coming to the fore in the 'red' Latin America, but for the time being, the turn to the left has stopped the U.S. project of a free trade zone from Alaska to Tierra del Fuegos. Brazil and Argentina in particular do not want to open their markets as long as the United States continues to subsidize its farmers with billions of dollars despite a WTO ruling to the contrary.. The United States has written off this project, and under pressure, from its farmers also, and now pins its hopes on bilateral agreements. In addition, Latin America has lost its significance for the United States. For the U.S. multinational companies the Asian markets are more interesting..

"As far as security policy is concerned, the turn to the left is no danger for the United States either but this turn to the left in Latin America shows efforts to politically and economically emancipate itself from the United States. Cuba has been accepted again in the Latin American family; in the WTO, Brazil opposes the United States; all this is evidence of a new Latin American self-confidence. Venezuela will gain influence between the Caribbean and the Andes, and Brazil will get a political leadership role because of its sheer size and economic power. President Monroe announced 183 years ago: 'America to the Americans' but it seems that the Monroe doctrine, the epitome of arrogance of the power in the North towards the South, will soon be a thing of the past."

H. (Chechnya) Council Of Europe On Russian Policy

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1. "Assistance For Chechnya"

Matthias Dobrinsky judged in an editorial for center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (1/26):

"Right from the start, Russia's President Vladimir Putin waged a two front war in Chechnya. First, he wanted to use military means to bring the Caucasian republic under control, and it has always been his concern to stop outrage in the West at the crimes of the Russian state in Northern Caucasus. Putin has now been more successful at the second than the first. He pinned his hopes on weariness and intimidation.. That is why the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe deserved praise on Wednesday. It pointed to the situation of the Caucasian republic and complained about the fact that people continue to be kidnapped by death squadrons. But it also criticized the member countries of the Council of Europe and accused them of closing their eyes to the 'climate of impunity' in Chechnya.

"But this climate will not change, as long as the western public hardly looks at the situation and as long as the wall of silence, erected by the Kremlin, continues to stand. The military and the militia forces in Chechnya must feel watched. Only then can the life of the people in the Republic become a bit safer."

I. (Africa) EU Mission To Congo

1. "The Congo Group"

Dominic Johnson commented in leftist die tageszeitung of Berlin (1/26):

"Nothing has been decided yet, but the debate over a potential participation of the Bundeswehr in a EU mission in Congo is weird. Nobody focuses on the reality in Congo; the country has become a synonym for Africa's chaotic darkness.. If the EU were to deploy troops, Germany could not abstain. A European mission is either right and Germany must participate, or it is wrong and then it should not happen at all."

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